

## Grade retention, by English language usage and proficiency, and disability status

*Studies have shown that students who repeat at least one grade are more likely to drop out of school. Students who have difficulty speaking English or who have disabling conditions already start school at a disadvantage, and although retaining these students may be a way to allow them to “catch up” to their grade level peers, it may also further stigmatize them. Knowledge of the differences in relationships between grade retention and English language proficiency and/or disability status can help school administrators develop effective grade retention policies and services for these students.*

- In 1995, 13 percent of students aged 5–17 spoke a language other than English at home; 5 percent had difficulty speaking English; and 8 percent had a disabling condition.
- The retention rate of children aged 5–17 who spoke Spanish at home in 1995 was similar to the retention rate of children aged 5–17 who spoke English at home (10 percent). However, retention rates varied by language spoken: The retention rate for children aged 5–17 who spoke only English at home was higher than that of children who spoke an Asian or other European language at home.
- Children aged 5–17 who had a disabling condition were more likely to repeat at least one grade in 1995 than were children aged 5–17 who did not have a disabling condition (25 versus 9 percent). The percentage of children aged 5–17 who had a disabling condition and who repeated at least one grade decreased between 1992 and 1995, declining from 29 to 25 percent, while the percentage of children who did not have a disabling condition and who repeated at least one grade remained similar.

### Percentage of all children aged 5–17 and those who repeated at least one grade, by English language usage and proficiency, and disability status: October 1992 and 1995

English language usage and proficiency, and disability status	All children		Repeated at least one grade	
	1992	1995	1992	1995
<b>Total 5- to 17-year-olds</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>9.9</b>
Child spoke English at home	86.3	86.9	10.5	10.1
Child spoke a language other than English at home	13.7	13.1	9.3	9.0
Spanish	9.2	9.9	11.3	10.4
Other European	1.1	1.0	7.9	4.3
Asian	2.1	1.0	3.8	2.4
Other	1.0	1.2	5.8	6.6
Children who spoke a language other than English at home and:				
Had difficulty speaking English <sup>1</sup>	4.6	4.8	7.8	7.8
Did not have difficulty speaking English <sup>1</sup>	8.9	8.3	10.1	9.7
Had taken an ESL course	—	3.0	—	9.9
Had not taken an ESL course	—	10.1	—	8.7
Disability status				
No disabling condition	90.1	91.8	8.1	8.5
Had a disabling condition <sup>2</sup>	9.9	8.2	29.4	24.6
Learning disability	4.3	3.1	40.4	34.5
Speech impediment	2.5	1.3	24.0	22.2

— Not available.

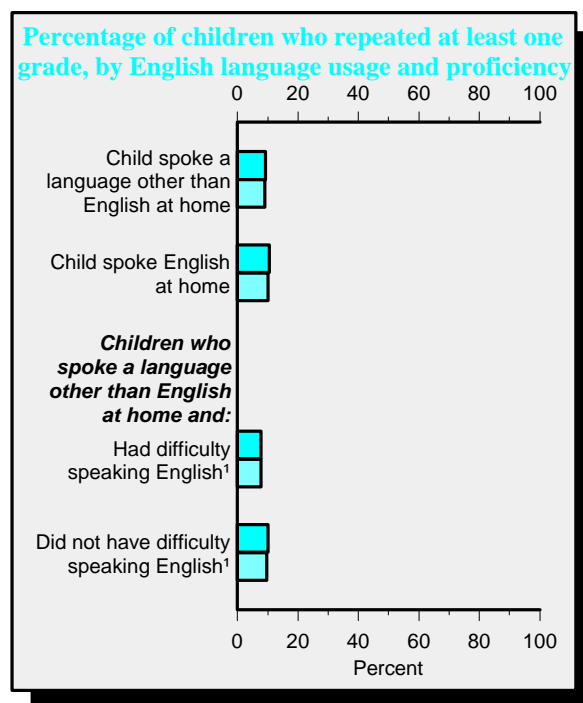
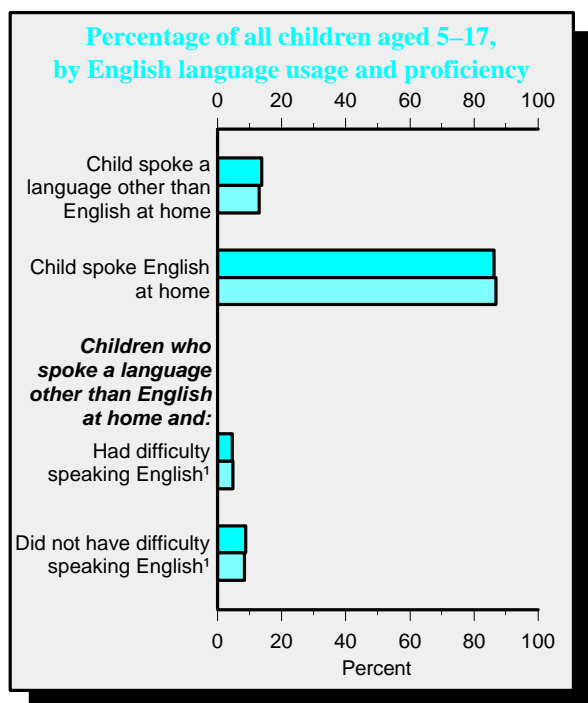
<sup>1</sup> Respondents were asked to rate the child's ability to speak English using the following scale: “not at all,” “not well,” “well,” or “very well.” If respondents answered “very well,” children were categorized as not having difficulty speaking English; all others were categorized as having difficulty speaking English.

<sup>2</sup> Included in the totals are other disabling conditions not presented in the table.

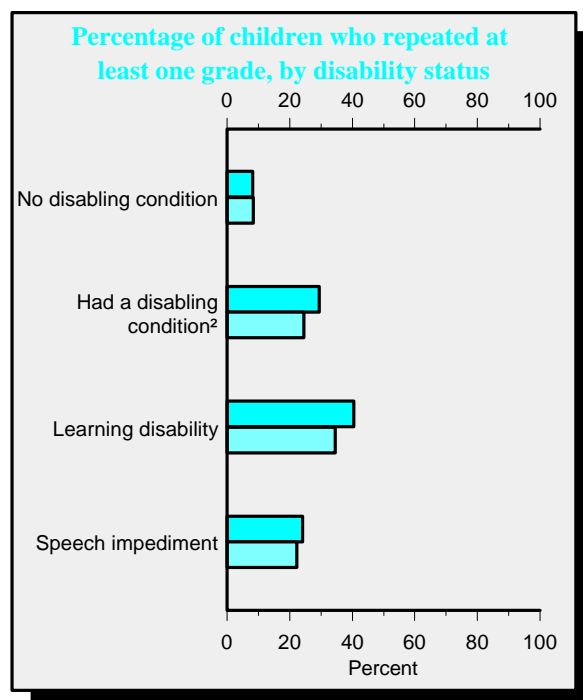
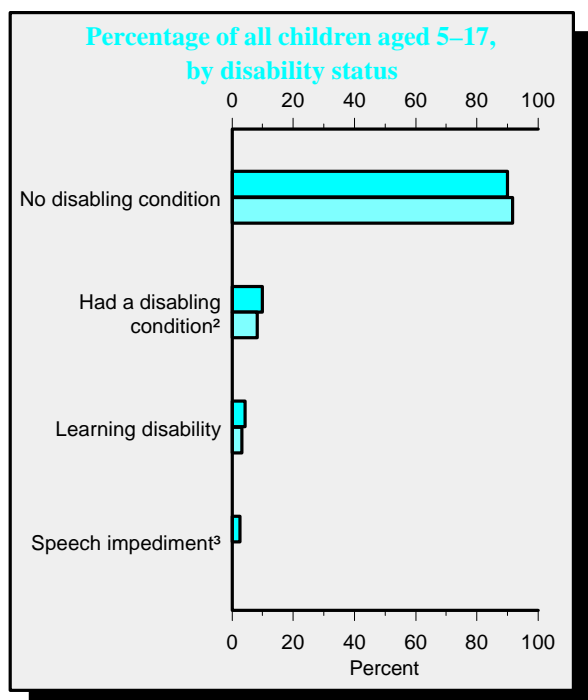
NOTE: In 1992, a small number of those who reported speaking a language other than English at home did not respond to the question on what language was spoken. Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys, 1992 and 1995.

Percentage of all children aged 5–17 and those who repeated at least one grade:  
October 1992 and 1995



■ 1992 ■ 1995



<sup>1</sup> Respondents were asked to rate the child's ability to speak English using the following scale: "not at all," "not well," "well," or "very well." If respondents answered "very well," children were categorized as not having difficulty speaking English; all others were categorized as having difficulty speaking English.

<sup>2</sup> Included in the totals are other disabling conditions not presented in the table.

<sup>3</sup> In 1995, the percentage of children aged 5–17 with a speech impediment was less than 2.0, and therefore the percentage is not discernable in the graph.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys, 1992 and 1995.

## Note to Indicator 4: Estimates of non-English language usage and English language proficiency

Questions on language usage and proficiency were asked of the household respondent (usually the household head or the spouse of the household head) about all household members 5 years old and over. For each of these individuals the questions consisted of the following: "Does this person speak a language other than English at home?" If yes, then "What language does this person speak?" and "How well does this person speak English? Very well, Well, Not well, or Not at all." In 1995, the question "Has this person ever taken a course to learn how to read or write English as a second language?" was added.

Researchers and policymakers recognized that the question on English ability is an extremely subjective one: It is not possible to apply an objective standard to a person's report on his or her own English ability, or even worse, that person's report on the English language ability of other household members, to determine whether that person is really limited in his or her English ability. Thus, as a means of validating the English ability question, the English Language Proficiency Survey (ELPS) was sponsored by the Department of Education and carried out by the Census Bureau in 1982. The results

of that survey, which included a lengthier set of questions about language and tests of English ability geared to age, revealed a strong correlation between responses on the English ability question and the test scores.\* Using a set pass/fail score, persons who had reported English speaking ability of "Very well" passed at a rate similar to English-only persons (who were used as a control group). Persons who reported less than "Very well," (e.g., "Well," "Not well," or "Not at all") had significantly higher rates of failure. These results indicated that, although it would not be advisable to use a person's response to the English language ability question as a diagnostic tool for determining that person's own need for language services, it was appropriate to use the results as an aggregate measure for the population as a whole. Thus the number of persons who reported speaking English less than "Very well" may be considered one measure of the number of limited-English-proficient persons in the country.

\* Kominski, Robert, "How Good Is 'How Well?' An Examination of the Census English-speaking Ability Question," 1989.

**Table 4-1 Percentage of all 16- to 24-year-olds and those who dropped out of school, by English language usage and proficiency, and disability status: October 1992 and 1995**

English language usage and proficiency, and disability status	16- to 24-year-olds		16- to 24-year-old dropouts <sup>1</sup>	
	1992	1995	1992	1995
<b>Total 16- to 24-year-olds</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>12.0</b>
Spoke English at home	85.7	85.1	8.8	9.6
Spoke a language other than English at home	14.3	14.9	21.5	24.2
Spanish	9.4	10.9	29.0	29.6
Other European	1.6	1.4	8.8	8.0
Asian	2.0	1.2	6.5	4.2
Other	1.2	1.5	4.3	7.9
16- to 24-year-olds who spoke a language other than English at home and:				
Had difficulty speaking English <sup>2</sup>	5.1	5.3	39.7	44.3
Did not have difficulty speaking English <sup>2</sup>	9.2	9.6	11.2	12.0
Had taken an ESL course	—	3.8	—	22.6
Had not taken an ESL course	—	1.5	—	24.8
Disability status				
No disabling condition	91.9	93.1	10.2	11.8
Had a disabling condition <sup>3</sup>	8.1	6.9	15.7	14.6
Blindness	0.7	0.1	16.2	16.9
Deafness	0.8	0.2	10.3	15.6
Other hearing impairment	1.1	0.5	13.5	( <sup>4</sup> )
Emotional disturbance	1.3	0.5	19.9	23.6
Learning disability	3.7	2.2	18.7	17.6
Orthopedic impairment	1.4	0.6	12.3	14.2
Mental retardation	1.2	0.5	22.4	31.1
Speech impediment	1.6	0.4	13.2	15.8

— Not available.

<sup>1</sup> Dropouts are those aged 16–24 who had not completed high school and who were not enrolled in school.

<sup>2</sup> Respondents were asked to rate the child's ability to speak English using the following scale: "not at all," "not well," "well," or "very well." If respondents answered "very well," children were categorized as not having difficulty speaking English; all others were categorized as having difficulty speaking English.

<sup>3</sup> Included in the totals are other disabling conditions not presented in the table. Some 16- to 24-year-olds with a disabling condition may be included in more than one disability category.

<sup>4</sup> Too few sample observations for a reliable estimate.

NOTE: For many key items in the October CPS, the Bureau of the Census imputes data for cases with missing data due to item non-response. However, for some of the items that were used in this indicator and in *Dropout Rates in the United States, 1995* item non-response was not imputed by the Bureau of the Census. Using a sequential hot deck procedure, the authors of the *Dropout Rates* report produced special imputations for nine items from the October 1995 CPS used in their report. To avoid inconsistency between this indicator and the *Dropout Rates* report, six of these items were also used for the statistics in this table and in table 4-2. Special imputations were not available for the October 1992 CPS at the time this table was prepared. However, different treatment of missing data due to item non-response in the two years is likely to have only small effects on the calculated statistics. For example, the dropout rate in 1995 for 16- to 24-year-olds who had repeated a grade was 24.4 when missing data on grade repetition and completing high school with a GED was imputed and 24.1 when these items were imputed. Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys, 1992 and 1995.

**Table 4-2 Percentage of all 16- to 24-year-olds who dropped out of school, by retention status, English language usage and proficiency, and disability status: October 1992 and 1995**

English language usage and proficiency, and disability status	1992			1995		
	Total	Had repeated at least one grade	Never repeated a grade	Total	Had repeated at least one grade	Never repeated a grade
<b>Total 16- to 24-year-olds</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>24.1</b>	<b>10.1</b>
Spoke English at home	8.8	19.5	7.1	9.6	24.3	7.3
Spoke a language other than English at home	21.5	22.3	21.3	24.2	23.2	24.4
Disability status						
No disabling condition	10.2	19.6	9.1	11.8	24.4	10.1
Had a disabling condition*	15.7	21.0	13.3	14.6	22.6	11.2
Learning disability	18.7	20.2	18.0	17.6	18.6	16.6

\* Included in the totals are other disabling conditions not presented in the table.

NOTE: For many key items in the October CPS, the Bureau of the Census imputes data for cases with missing data due to item non-response. However, for some of the items that were used in this indicator and in *Dropout Rates in the United States, 1995* item non-response was not imputed by the Bureau of the Census. Using a sequential hot deck procedure, the authors of the *Dropout Rates* report produced special imputations for nine items from the October 1995 CPS used in their report. To avoid inconsistency between this indicator and the *Dropout Rates* report, six of these items were also used for the statistics in this table and in table 4-1. Special imputations were not available for the October 1992 CPS at the time this table was prepared. However, different treatment of missing data due to item non-response in the two years is likely to have only small effects on the calculated statistics. For example, the dropout rate in 1995 for 16- to 24-year-olds who had repeated a grade was 24.4 when missing data on grade repetition and completing high school with a GED was imputed and 24.1 when these items were imputed.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys, 1992 and 1995.

**Table 4-3 Percentage of all children aged 5–17 and those who repeated at least one grade, by type of disability: October 1992 and October 1995**

Type of disability	All children		Repeated at least one grade	
	1992	1995	1992	1995
<b>Total 5- to 17-year-olds</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>9.9</b>
Disability status				
No disabling condition	90.1	91.8	8.1	8.5
Had a disabling condition*	9.9	8.2	29.4	24.6
Blindness	0.3	0.1	17.1	—
Deafness	0.4	0.2	19.6	28.1
Other hearing impairment	1.2	0.5	22.9	17.9
Emotional disturbance	0.9	0.6	35.6	38.2
Learning disability	4.3	3.1	40.4	34.5
Orthopedic impairment	1.0	0.4	16.4	19.2
Mental retardation	0.7	0.4	21.2	25.0
Speech impediment	2.5	1.3	24.0	22.2

— Too few sample observations for a reliable estimate.

\* Included in the totals are other disabling conditions not presented in the table. Children aged 5–17 with a disabling condition may be included in more than one disability category.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys, 1992 and 1995.

**Table S4 Standard errors for the text table in *Indicator 4***

English language usage and proficiency, and disability status	All children		Repeated at least one grade	
	1992	1995	1992	1995
<b>Total 5- to 17-year-olds</b>	—	—	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.2</b>
Child spoke English at home	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Child spoke a language other than English at home	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.6
Spanish	0.2	0.2	0.8	0.7
Other European	0.1	0.1	3.4	1.2
Asian	0.1	0.1	2.1	1.6
Other	0.1	0.1	1.9	1.7
Children who spoke a language other than English at home and:				
Had difficulty speaking English	0.2	0.2	1.0	0.9
Did not have difficulty speaking English	0.2	0.2	1.1	1.0
Had taken an ESL course	(*)	0.1	(*)	1.3
Had not taken an ESL course	(*)	0.2	(*)	0.7
Disability status				
No disabling condition	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Had a disabling condition	0.2	0.2	1.2	1.2
Learning disability	0.2	0.1	1.9	2.1
Speech impediment	0.1	0.1	2.2	2.9

— Not applicable.

\* Not available.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys, 1992 and 1995.

**Table S4-1 Standard errors for table 4-1**

English language usage and proficiency, and disability status	16- to 24-year-olds		16- to 24-year-old dropouts	
	1992	1995	1992	1995
<b>Total 16- to 24-year-olds</b>	—	—	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.3</b>
Spoke English at home	0.9	0.9	1.1	1.0
Spoke a language other than English at home	0.9	0.9	1.1	1.0
Spanish	0.7	0.8	1.4	1.3
Other European	0.3	0.3	2.2	2.2
Asian	0.4	0.3	1.7	1.8
Other	0.3	0.3	1.8	2.1
16- to 24-year-olds who spoke a language other than English at home and:				
Had difficulty speaking English	0.6	0.6	2.1	2.1
Did not have difficulty speaking English	0.7	0.7	1.0	1.0
Had taken an ESL course	(')	0.5	(')	1.9
Had not taken an ESL course	(')	0.3	(')	1.2
Disability status				
No disabling condition	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.3
Had a disabling condition	0.7	0.6	1.2	1.3
Blindness	0.2	<sup>4</sup> 0.0	4.3	9.9
Deafness	0.2	<sup>4</sup> 0.0	3.4	7.7
Other hearing impairment	0.3	0.2	3.1	(')
Emotional disturbance	0.3	0.2	3.4	5.8
Learning disability	0.5	0.4	2.0	2.4
Orthopedic impairment	0.3	0.2	2.7	4.1
Mental retardation	0.3	0.2	3.6	6.2
Speech impediment	0.3	0.2	2.6	5.4

— Not applicable.

<sup>1</sup> Not available.

<sup>4</sup> Standard errors less than 0.05 are rounded to 0.0.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys, 1992 and 1995.

**Table S4-2 Standard errors for table 4-2**

	1992			1995		
	Total	Had repeated at least one grade	Never repeated a grade	Total	Had repeated at least one grade	Never repeated a grade
English language usage and proficiency, and disability status						
Total 16- to 24-year-olds	0.3	1.2	0.3	0.3	1.1	0.3
Spoke English at home	1.1	1.3	0.3	1.0	1.2	0.3
Spoke a language other than English at home	1.1	3.5	1.1	1.0	2.9	1.1
Disability status						
No disabling condition	0.3	1.4	0.3	0.3	1.2	0.3
Had a disabling condition	1.2	2.5	1.4	1.3	2.8	1.4
Learning disability	2.0	3.2	2.5	2.4	3.5	3.3

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys, 1992 and 1995.

**Table S4-3 Standard errors for table 4-3**

Type of disability	All children		Repeated at least one grade	
	1992	1995	1992	1995
Total 5- to 17-year olds	—	—	0.2	0.2
Disability status				
No disabling condition	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Had a disabling condition	0.2	0.2	1.2	1.2
Blindness	0.0	0.0	5.9	(*)
Deafness	0.0	0.0	5.1	8.8
Other hearing impairment	0.1	0.1	3.1	4.3
Emotional disturbance	0.1	0.1	4.0	4.8
Learning disability	0.2	0.1	1.9	2.1
Orthopedic impairment	0.1	0.0	3.1	4.7
Mental retardation	0.1	0.0	4.1	5.2
Speech impediment	0.1	0.1	2.2	2.9

— Not applicable.

\* Standard errors less than 0.05 are rounded to 0.0.

~ Not available.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys, 1992 and 1995.

**Percentage of all children aged 5–17 and those who repeated at least one grade, by English language usage and proficiency, and disability status: October 1992 and 1995**

English language usage and proficiency, and disability status	All children		Repeated at least one grade	
	1992	1995	1992	1995
<b>Total 5- to 17-year-olds</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>9.9</b>
Child spoke English at home	86.3	86.9	10.5	10.1
Child spoke a language other than English at home	13.7	13.1	9.3	9.0
Spanish	9.2	9.9	11.3	10.4
Other European	1.1	1.0	7.9	4.3
Asian	2.1	1.0	3.8	2.4
Other	1.0	1.2	5.8	6.6
Children who spoke a language other than English at home and:				
Had difficulty speaking English <sup>1</sup>	4.6	4.8	7.8	7.8
Did not have difficulty speaking English <sup>1</sup>	8.9	8.3	10.1	9.7
Had taken an ESL course	—	3.0	—	9.9
Had not taken an ESL course	—	10.1	—	8.7
Disability status				
No disabling condition	90.1	91.8	8.1	8.5
Had a disabling condition <sup>2</sup>	9.9	8.2	29.4	24.6
Learning disability	4.3	3.1	40.4	34.5
Speech impediment	2.5	1.3	24.0	22.2

— Not available.

<sup>1</sup> Respondents were asked to rate the child's ability to speak English using the following scale: "not at all," "not well," "well," or

"very well." If respondents answered "very well," children were categorized as not having difficulty speaking English;

all others were categorized as having difficulty speaking English.

<sup>2</sup> Included in the totals are other disabling conditions not presented in the table.

NOTE: In 1992, a small number of those who reported speaking a language other than English at home did not respond to the question on what language was spoken. Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys, 1992 and 1995.